



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

“THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE”

January, 2021

A Blessed New Year

January, 2021.

The start of another new year. What will it hold for you and me?



Saying “Happy New Year” doesn’t cost anything, and it also doesn’t mean very much. I can wish you a Happy New Year and give absolutely no thought to what I might be able to do to make the coming year “happy” for you. I am not really making any investment in your future happiness.

But what if it is God who is wishing you a “Happy New Year”?

That’s a silly question, of course. By and large, God is not all that interested in our being happy. Happiness is always temporary, and it depends on our circumstances. If I am experiencing a certain amount of pleasure and very little pain, I can be happy. Happiness is a moment-by-moment, surface thing, and has very little to do with actual well-being.

God is more interested in what is best for us in the long run. His focus is eternal. As He said to the people of Israel, He surely also says to us: “I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

What does God wish for us, rather than happiness? A good starting point might be the list of the fruit of the Spirit given in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

LOVE. God wishes you love—not that others love you, but that you love others; that you have a loving heart and that your actions show your love for others. Jesus emphasized that we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love our neighbors as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31) Paul echoed this in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: If we don’t have love [for others], we have nothing.

JOY. In John 15:11, 16:24, and 17:13 Jesus wished to impart His joy to His disciples. What is His joy? It is the joy that the Father has for each lost soul who gets saved. It’s the great feeling of “rightness” that comes from being in synch with God’s goodness and holiness. That is the joy that was before Jesus when He went to the cross for our sakes. (Hebrews 12:2)



PEACE. We have real peace when we stop struggling and rebelling against God. It comes when we say to Him (and mean it), “Not my will, but Your will, be done.”

PATIENCE. Why patience? It’s really very simple. Some things just don’t happen instantly or even quickly. Sometimes we have to wait. If we lack patience, then whatever peace we might have had is destroyed. But if we have patience, then whatever is going to happen will eventually happen, and we will not have worn ourselves out with being impatient or frustrated or angry about it.

KINDNESS. Kindness means more than just not being cruel. It means going out of our way to be helpful or comforting, or to give any sort of good blessing to another person, or even an animal. And the saying that “It is more blessed to give than to receive” is especially true of kindness. It just feels good to be kind.

GOODNESS. Jesus said that no one is good except God alone. (Mark 10:18) But while we can't claim to be good, God wants us to have some of His goodness in us. He want us to value what is good and right, and (as He does) hate what is evil and wrong. An important part of being good is doing good, and so God has prepared “good works” for His saved ones to be doing (Ephesians 2:8-10).

FAITHFULNESS: The Old Testament has many references to the faithfulness of God. It shows that faithfulness is continuing to do what is right, regardless of the passage of time or changes in circumstances. You could say that being faithful is doing what God wants us to do, and being really stubborn about it. Lack of faithfulness is what so disappointed Jesus about the people of the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-16).

GENTLENESS. As it says in Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Or, in other words, don't provoke a fight when you don't need to. Jesus claimed to be “gentle and lowly in heart,” and His disciples should be like that, too, thus finding rest for their souls. (Matthew 11:29)

SELF-CONTROL. Why is this mentioned? Why isn't it simply in-born? Am I not naturally in control of myself? But the answer is, not always, or not necessarily. Sometimes we let ourselves be controlled by circumstances, or by other people's wishes, or even by our own runaway emotions such as pride, greed, anger or lust. Self-control means the ability always to behave in a way that is pleasing to God, in spite of temptations or provocations that would cause us to behave wrongly. It is basically the opposite of, and the corrective force against, self-indulgence..

So, rather than “Happy New Year,” what is God's wish for you and me this year? His wish is the same every year, and every day of every year, and it's expressed in the Bible by several invitations:

“Come to me, all [of you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ... Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” (Isaiah 55:1,3)

If this coming to the Lord depended only on our will and abilities, it would never happen. But Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter, our Helper, and our Guide. (John 15:26 and 16:27) When we ask God to fill us and empower us with His Holy Spirit, He does so. And as we follow the Spirit's guidance, we become more truly God's children (Romans 8:14), and the fruit of the Spirit is developed more and more fully in us. That's God's “Blessed New Year” wish for us.

I wish each of you a new year filled with the Lord Jesus—His Joy, His Peace, His Love and His Light filling your heart each day. Though your circumstances may be dark and difficult, if you are “in Christ” then you are where you need to be. And if you are not yet in Christ, here's a special invitation:

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (Revelation 22:17)

Your friend in Jesus, the Lord—

Brother Roland

Two “New Beginning” Psalms

This psalm is especially meaningful for me. The first time I ever read it I said, “Yes! That’s what God has done for me!

Psalm 40:1-11; 16-17

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the Lord!”

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!

Psalm 51 expresses David’s dismay at having failed so utterly to live up to God’s expectations of him; and his hope for God’s forgiveness and for grace to “begin again” to be the man God wants him to be.

Psalm 51:1-17

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

I do not have any Bibles or study materials to send to inmates.

But if you have a Bible question or a question about the Christian life, you can send it to me at

Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222

I’ll do my best to answer it, and your question may be helpful to someone else as well. God bless you!

Holiness

"... Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:13-16)

We may not achieve it today or tomorrow, but this is our goal as Christians.

Puzzle:

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Words:

*Holiness is:

A LIFELONG PROCESS
BECOMING LIKE JESUS
BELONGING TO GOD
BEING SET APART
CARING
COMMANDED
COMMUNION
ETERNAL DELIGHT
FAITHFULNESS
FORGIVING
FREEDOM FROM SIN
FULLNESS OF JOY
GENTLENESS

GIVING
GOD'S WORK IN US
GODLINESS
GOODNESS
JOY
LIGHT
LIVING SACRIFICE
LONG-SUFFERING
LOVE
MEEKNESS
MORAL PURITY
OBEDIENCE
OUR TRUE GOAL
PEACE

PRAISE
PROMISED
RESTING IN THE LORD
SANCTIFICATION
SELF-CONTROL
SERVING
SONSHIP
SPIRITUAL WORSHIP
SURRENDER
THE DIVINE NATURE
TRANSFORMATION
WHOLENESS
WORSHIP